

Clinton honors chemistry professor

Geraldine Richmond has served as a mentor to women in science

By Laura Cadiz
Higher Education Editor

As a female science student in the 1970s, chemistry professor Geraldine Richmond found herself in a male-dominated field. She never had a female mentor nor a female science professor.

"Science has been so important to my life," Richmond said. "I like to see other women do it."

Throughout her teaching career, Richmond has been dedicated to helping women break into science-related fields.

On Sept. 11, President Clinton presented Richmond with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring. She was awarded this recognition for her excellence in mentoring women, an underrepresented group in science. A \$10,000 grant accompanied the award.

"To be recognized in something I believe so strongly in is really very nice," Richmond said.

The award is bestowed by the White House through the National Science and Technology Council and the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Richmond joined nine other individuals and ten organizations at the Old Executive Building in Washington, D.C. to be honored with the award.

Twelve of Richmond's students from her earlier teaching career at Bryn Mawr College were among those who nominated her for the award. All of the women are now pursuing careers in science and wrote a group letter to the award committee.

"Geri stands out as the most influential mentor of my career," wrote Pamela Chu, a research chemist at the National Institute of Standard Technology. "Starting when I was a sophomore, she opened my eyes to the excitement and challenge of a research career. Geri's enthusiasm and groundbreaking work in research and education continues to be a source of inspiration."

Tamara Wong, staff officer at the National Research Council, said Richmond deserved the award for her excellent research, love of teaching and love of people.

"I've always relied on her as a sounding board, trusting her as a mentor and a researcher," she said. "An effective advisor gives you encouragement; that's what she does well. She's a trail blazer."

Despite all the praise, Richmond said she owes her success to her students.

"It's just a big honor. I wouldn't have won this if it wasn't for how successful my students have been," Richmond said. "This is as much a credit to them as it is to me."

"These women are enormously successful. To play a role in their careers, nothing is more important than that. To see them and help them be successful is the bottom line. It all comes down to them."

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